

# **Carbondale, Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1828-1980**

By S. Robert Powell

The newspaper collection in the archives of the Carbondale Historical Society and Museum, the Carbondale D&H Transportation Museum, and the Carbondale Public Library is an astonishing research resource. The collection covers the period from 1828 to 1980.

In 1983, S. Robert Powell and Donald W. Powell took it upon themselves to have microfilmed all of the nineteenth-century newspapers, then in the collection of the Carbondale Public Library. In the course of the following two years, the entire collection of nineteenth-century newspapers was microfilmed by Micrographics International, Inc., Hazleton, PA. Forty-three rolls of silver archival microfilm were produced, all funded by S. Robert Powell and Donald W. Powell.

Working copies of those forty-three rolls of microfilm were presented, in 1985, to the Carbondale Public Library. The 43 rolls of original silver archival microfilm were stored in a Carbondale bank vault from 1985 to February 16, 1990, when they were donated to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (1300 Locust St, Philadelphia, PA 19107 Phone 215-732-6200), where, with any luck, they will be preserved forever.

On April 2, 1985, S. Robert Powell initiated a second Carbondale newspaper microfilm project, this time working with Barbara Smith, Assistant Dean of the Pennsylvania State University Libraries, to have microfilmed, as part of the "Pennsylvania Newspaper Project," all of the Carbondale newspapers from 1899 to 1980, now in the collection of the Carbondale Historical Society and Museum and the Carbondale D&H Transportation Museum.

Working with Carbondale Historical Society members Henry J. Loftus and Donald W. Powell, and with David R. Hoffman, Library Services Director of the State Library of Pennsylvania, and with William A. Hamill, Rebecca Wilson, and Suzanne Kellerman, staff members of the Pennsylvania Newspaper Project, the Carbondale Historical Society orchestrated the microfilming, by Micrographics International, Inc., in the period 1985-1988, of 90 volumes of Carbondale

newspapers, covering the period 1900-1980. The original microfilms of those 90 volumes are in the holdings of the State Library of Pennsylvania (Bureau of State Library, Forum Building, 607 South Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0600 Phone 717-783-5950), where, with any luck, they will be preserved forever. Kodak #1220367 vesicular positive copies of those microfilms are in the microfilm reading room at the Carbondale Public Library. This enormous microfilming project in 1985-1988 was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Pew Memorial Trust.

## **Saving the Nineteenth Century Carbondale Newspapers**

The newspapers that were published in Carbondale during the nineteenth century were created by first class writers and editors and are primary historical documents of exceptionally high quality.

The fact that most of the components of that astonishing newspaper legacy from the nineteenth century in Carbondale are still extant is almost beyond belief, but they are, and that is a consequence of the foresight, intelligence, diligence, and perseverance of one man, Dilton Yarrington, who throughout his long life avidly collected—and had bound volumes created of—all the newspapers in his world.

We are very pleased to express here our thanks and gratitude to the writers and editors of those newspapers and to Dilton Yarrington for their splendid and epoch-defining work.

Dilton Yarrington was born in Wilkes-Barre, October 8, 1803, the son of Peter and Naomi (Flint) Yarrington. On December 23, 1827, Dilton Yarrington married Rebecca Lambert of Wyalusing. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1847, they moved to Carbondale, where they lived in a house on Highland Avenue, in front of which was a row of forty-two finely formed and healthy white ash trees, one rod apart, that were planted by Dilton Yarrington. Those trees were widely regarded as the most beautiful rows of shade trees in Northern Pennsylvania.

Dilton Yarrington was a blacksmith and lumberman, who owned and operated a highly successful steam saw mill in Carbondale. He was fond of reporting that

during his time in the saw mill business that he sawed about 36,000,000 feet of lumber, and about 20,000,000 feet of lath. His father, Peter Yarrington, was also a blacksmith, and it was he who made the first grate ever made to burn successfully anthracite coal. That grate was first used on February 22, 1808, in Judge Fell's residence on Northampton Street in Wilkes-Barre, and Dilton Yarrington was present at the time. As a blacksmith, Dilton Yarrington engaged in the manufacture of edge tools and agricultural implements, and his axes became famous with the early settlers of the region. He affirmed that it was his strong right arm that fashioned many of the tools which were used in the construction of the D&H Gravity Railroad. As a blacksmith he also once remarked that if all the horses and oxen he had shod in his lifetime stood in a line that they would reach from Wilkes-Barre to San Francisco.

Dilton Yarrington was an accomplished and highly successful blacksmith and lumberman, to be sure, but it was his lifelong interest in public affairs and newspapers that interests us most here. As a 9-year old boy, we learn from his obituary that "During the war of 1812 he served as errand boy to one of the army officers who were stationed at Wilkes-Barre and thus at an early age was led to take a deep interest in public affairs. Every issue of the local paper was read aloud to the men employed in his father's blacksmith shop and the workshop soon became a once-a-week resort for the villagers to hear the blacksmith's boy read the latest war news." (**ANOTHER PIONEER GONE. / Dilton Yarrington Passed Away Last Evening—History of a Life That Grew With This Region.** *Carbondale Leader*, November 25, 1890, p. 4)

From a letter to the editor of *The New-York Tribune* that Dilton Yarrington wrote in 1888 (letter reprinted in the March 15, 1888 issue, p. 3, of the Carbondale newspaper, *The Journal*) we learn that when Dilton Yarrington learned that "a runaway apprentice boy from Vermont, named Horace Greeley" was about to start a newspaper, that he wrote Greeley immediately and subscribed to Horace Greeley's newspaper, a subscription that Dilton Yarrington maintained from that day on. Of Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune*, Yarrington said that he considered it "one of the best—if not the very best—paper printed on earth."

In an interview written by "C" that was published in *The Wilkes-Barre Telephone* ("The Canvasser Walking and Writing," February 18, 1888, p. 2), Yarrington said

to C: "Come with me and I will show you all the newspapers every [sic; should be "ever"] published in Dundaff and Carbondale since 1828. I have them all bound, two years together. They make a pile more than six feet high."

That pile more than six feet high of bound volumes of newspapers from Dundaff and Carbondale is the astonishing nineteenth-century newspaper legacy of Carbondale. Those bound volumes, all of which have now been microfilmed, are now in the archives of the Carbondale Historical Society and Museum.

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